

P 051223Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6636
INFO ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000984

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: CALM APPEARANCE MASKS ONGOING ABUSES

REF: A. RANGOON 977

[1](#)B. RANGOON 972 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Raids and arrests continued in Burma despite the appearance of normalcy in the streets. Authorities publicly claimed to have detained 2,093 persons since September 25. Separately the Deputy Foreign Minister told Charge 2,787 people had been released and only 1,034 remain. The NLD reported authorities have arrested 210 NLD members in the past 10 days. UNDP reported police are attempting to confiscate computer hard drives from the Japan International Cooperation Agency offices in downtown Rangoon. Through a spokesman, the NLD said Aung San Suu Kyi should be released before she can respond to the government's accusations against her or consider a meeting with Than Shwe. UNDP officials confirmed its local employee and three others were released unharmed on October 4. Other sources reported a Japanese Embassy local employee was released yesterday. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Speaking on behalf of his party, NLD Spokesman U Nyan Win told us that Aung San Suu Kyi must be released before she can properly respond to the regime's latest accusations against her or consider their offer for her to meet with Than Shwe. He pointed out that as the government's statements referred only to Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD Central Executive Committee would not respond on her behalf but hoped instead that she could respond on their behalf as a free woman.

[1](#)3. (C) Rangoon appeared normal again today. Businesses and schools were open and traffic flowed freely. While still present, security forces maintained a low profile throughout most of the city. DAO reported it did not see any significant presence of the 66th or 77th Light Infantry Battalions in Rangoon today and is seeking to confirm reports the 77th has already returned to its base outside Bago (DAO Rangoon septel).

[1](#)4. (C) Despite the appearance of normalcy, arrests and raids continue. According to the NLD, authorities have arrested over 200 NLD members, including 15 MP's elect, in the past ten days. Many of these persons were reportedly seized from their homes at night. Party spokesman Nyan Win reported two party members were arrested in Rangoon the night of October 4 and three more were detained in Bago Division today. Other Embassy sources reported raids continued in Rangoon last night although details could not be confirmed. The government-run New Light of Myanmar reported authorities had detained 2,093 persons since September 25 of whom it

claimed 692 have been released. The Deputy FM told Charge another 2,000 would be released today leaving only 1,034 persons remaining in detention (their math).

15. (C) UNDP Resident Representative Charles Petrie told P/E Chief that as of 1800, officers from the Police Special Branch (SB) were attempting to confiscate computer hard drives from the downtown Rangoon offices of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). According to Petrie, SB acted on the belief that JICA employees had downloaded photos and videos taken during last week's crackdown onto the office's computers. Petrie said JICA is trying to prevent the seizure of its property and UNDP will intervene on its behalf. JICA is located in Sakura Tower, an office building overlooking downtown Rangoon and Sule Pagoda, the site of the largest of last week's demonstrations and subsequent crackdown.

16. (C) UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Sanaka Samarasinha confirmed authorities released a detained UNDP employee and her husband, brother-in-law, and driver the evening of September 4. All four are reportedly emotionally shaken but in good physical condition and are resting with family. Samarasinha personally drove to Kayaikasan Race Course to pick her up while another UNDP official retrieved the three men from Government Technical Institute (GTI) near Insein prison. Samarasinha reported he saw at least 50 other detainees at Kayaikasan waiting to be released and observed a large number of family members waiting in the parking lot to

retrieve them. Without citing his source, Samarasinha told us several of the detainees at Kayaikasan had been transferred there after brief stays in Insein prison. Samarasinha commented he believed Kayaikasan and GTI are being used as temporary holding facilities rather than long-term detention centers. While UNDP did not provide any details regarding how their employee's release was obtained, Phone Win, another Embassy contact with established connections with the police, claimed he helped broker the deal (septel).

17. (C) UNDP also confirmed two World Food Program employees and a former UNDP employee were released earlier this week after having been detained for several days. UNDP said none of these detained employees had been actively engaged in any demonstrations or protests.

18. (C) Embassy sources told us that on October 4, a local employee from the Japanese Embassy was released after spending seven days in custody. While the Japanese Embassy has not yet confirmed this, earlier in the week, the Japanese DCM told our DCM authorities had acknowledged his detention and agreed to release him within the week if his case was not made public (reftel B).

19. (C) In an October 5 meeting, acting Singaporean DCM Mark Low told DCM Singapore is trying to take the lead in preparing the ASEAN position on Burma because Indonesia is not being very assertive in the process. Low said approximately one quarter of the Singaporean community in Burma left the country last week and that only 300 Singaporeans remain behind. He did not specify if or when he expected these people would return. Low noted however that the Singaporean Embassy believed the situation in Rangoon was more stable and was no longer actively considering evacuation.

110. (C) Australian DCM Simon Starr told DCM the Government of Australia is considering imposing a visa ban based on the EU list of officials and government cronies. He said that while the Australians do not yet have legislation to allow them to seize the Burmese officials' existing assets in Australia, they would block future transfers into the country. According to the Australian Embassy, there are only two Australian investment projects in Burma, both of which are being strongly encouraged to divest by Canberra.
VILLAROSA